



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A14100056

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We received an allegation regarding an NSF awardee¹ who terminated its partnership with an industrial partner² at the time NSF issued the award.³ Specifically it was alleged that the awardee's PI and coPIs⁴ misled NSF regarding their intent to form the partnership and use the industrial partner's expertise and technology. The NSF submission process for this program⁵ required the proposing institution to submit letters of intent from its industrial partner(s) at the time of proposal submission. Once NSF determined that an award was likely, the program required submission of more formal documentation between the partners. The NSF program announcement specifically noted NSF would not dictate the format of such an agreement nor would it provide templates.

The award in question involved several industrial partners, only one of whom the awardee dismissed from the project at the time the award was finalized. The awardee and that partner did not execute a written contract as part of their formalized documentation at the final phase of the NSF award process. The program officer was aware that the awardee had decided not to work with that partner and that awareness did not influence the decision to fund the award. The program officer also did not consider it a change in scope.

Although the dismissed partner asserts a uniqueness in its technological contribution to one of the project aims, another industrial partner with a similar technology was substituted in to complete the project aim. The program officer had no objection to the substitution.

Because the program officer does not appear to have been misled (research misconduct or fraud) nor to object to the current execution of the project, there is no actionable misconduct.

Accordingly, this case is closed.

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